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SUBJECT: TIBET PARTY LINE PITFALL: "TIBET HAS BEEN PART OF CHINA SINCE ANCIENT TIMES"

REF: A) CHENGDU 251; B) CHENGDU 248

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11. (U) This message contains sensitive but unclassified information. Not for Internet distribution.

12. (SBU) Summary: The politically charged historical statement "Tibet has been part of China since ancient times" has been widely used in the PRC media and officials since 2008 and became an additional condition that the "Dalai Clique" must accept. Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) government websites and media even put this new Tibet policy formulation into the mouth of the U.S. Consul General, visiting from Chengdu last October, via a fabricated quote. While foreigners generally leave ancient history to the historians, this is an intensely political issue for which the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) and its propaganda apparatus are ready to use bold-faced lies to promote.

13. (SBU) The statement "Tibet has been part of China since ancient times" itself became part of the party line only in 2008, inspired by a 2007 book. This Tibet rhetoric has echoes: the theme "has been a part of China since ancient times" is now showing up in unofficial PRC articles and blog postings about Xinjiang, Taiwan and Mongolia. Foreign visitors and scholars are sometimes victims of misrepresentation in the PRC press on sensitive issues, including then-senator Hillary Clinton (on references to Tiananmen) in her memoirs. End Summary.

After Refusing to Correct Record in "Free TAR Media",  
TAR Official Invites U.S. to Issue its Own Correction

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14. (SBU) TAR government websites and media maliciously "quoted" Chengdu CG's October 20 in a meeting with TAR Vice Governor Wu, quoting him as saying "Tibet has been part of China since ancient times." (Chinese of misquote is [tinyurl.com/yj2tx3e](http://tinyurl.com/yj2tx3e); see also ref A.) When CG protested to the TAR Foreign Affairs Office (FAO), an official replied that since the TAR has a "free press," and cannot be given orders-- two cynical falsehoods, of course, as the PRC's press -- particularly press organs attached to the government -- are tightly controlled. If the USG disagrees with the report, the FAO official said, then it should put out its own statement.

15. (U) There are at least three ways, and one new fourth way, to say that Tibet is part of China:

- Tibet is part of China.
- Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China
- Tibet is historically part of China
- Tibet has been part of China since ancient times. (Xizang zigu yilai shi zhongguode yibufen)

16. (SBU) Discussion of the Tibet-China question founders in the complexity of the questions what is Tibet and what is China:

- "What is Tibet?" in both English and Chinese statements refer to Tibet as the Tibetan Autonomous Region where about half (three million) of China's ethnic Tibetans live. By contrast, the Dalai Lama and most ethnic Tibetans consider Tibet to be not just the TAR, but also adjacent Tibetan areas of China including parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan: altogether a quarter of the territory of the PRC.

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- "What is China" the current territory of the PRC was home to a succession of dynasties, some led by foreign invaders, some led by Chinese with constantly shifting borders as imperial power waxed and waned. Chinese nationalists often consider the conquest of a territory or tribute relations with a previous dynasty as strengthening the claim for the PRC to that territory, and that the Republic of China, and later the PRC, have a natural claim to the former territory of the Qing Empire.

Historical Background:

Three Generations of PRC Leaders on Tibet and China

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17. (SBU) Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaping and Jiang Zemin on Tibet:

- Mao Zedong: according to the current story in China's official media, Mao wanted the Dalai Lama to recognize Tibet as part of China, and allow democratic and socialist reforms in Tibet (URL at [tinyurl.com/ylsfdxm](http://tinyurl.com/ylsfdxm)).

- Deng Xiaoping: according to official media, in 1979 Deng said Tibet is part of China, and made that the main question in China's discussions with representatives of the Dalai Lama, placing less emphasis on subsidiary questions (URL at

tinyurl.com/yfxsd83).

-- Jiang Zemin: according to official media, Jiang Zemin said in 1998 that the Dalai Lama should recognize not only that Tibet is part of China, but also that Taiwan is part of China, and that the PRC is the only legitimate government of China (URL at [tinyurl.com/yjh547f](http://tinyurl.com/yjh547f)). [Comment: The PRC has been adding ever more conditions that the Dalai Lama must meet. For more on the PRC and the Dalai Lama, see ref B on CG's meeting with the United Front Department.]

In 2007, "Tibet has been Part of China Since Ancient Times"

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18. (U) The formulation "Tibet has been part of China since ancient times" seems to have arisen in 2007; Chinese language Google searches turn up nothing earlier. The formulation seems to have arisen from the 2007 book "The Local History of Tibet" [Xizang Difang Tongshi Shu described at URL [tinyurl.com/yfr24ro](http://tinyurl.com/yfr24ro)] by two Chinese/ethnic Han scholars at the TAR Academy of Social Sciences, Luo Guangwu and He Zongying.

19. (U) After March 2008, an increasing number of articles using the formulation "Tibet has been part of China since ancient times" have appeared in the PRC media. Sun Yong (ethnic Han), Deputy Director of the TAR Academy of Social Sciences says that Tibet is part of China's history, or China's frontier history from its very beginnings and does not just date from the Yuan Dynasty one thousand years ago. Sun claims that Tibetans like the Han and other PRC nationalities are all descended from Beijing Man found by archaeologists at Zhoukoudian near Beijing during the 1930s (URL at [tinyurl.com/auuks6](http://tinyurl.com/auuks6)).

110. (U) The CPC's United Front Department, which has responsibility for work on nationalities issues and is the contact point for talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives, added "from ancient times" to the list of points that the Dalai Lama must accept. In June 2009, Zhu Weiqun, the lead PRC counterpart for the Dalai Lama's representatives and Executive Deputy Director of the United Front Department, said that the point at issue with the Dalai Clique is that they completely

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deny Tibet has been part of China since ancient times. "We on the other hand insist that Tibet has been part of China throughout its history" (URL at [tinyurl.com/yj6ha3c](http://tinyurl.com/yj6ha3c)).

On an Ancient Rhetorical Roll: Tibet, Xinjiang and Mongolia Too

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111. (U) The Tibet rhetoric has echoes: the theme "has been a part of China since ancient times" is now showing up in unofficial PRC articles and blog postings about Xinjiang, Taiwan and Mongolia:

-- "Xinjiang has been part of China since ancient times" an August 2009 Guangming Ribao [a CPC paper aimed at intellectuals] article in Guangming Ribao by Li Ren of the China Border Region

History and Geography Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

-- The formula "Taiwan has been part of China since ancient times" has been taken up by many unofficial articles and blogs. A Google.cn search comes up with over 300,000 hits on this phrase from articles and blogs online mostly over the past several years [URL [tinyurl.com/taiwan-at](http://tinyurl.com/taiwan-at)].

-- and even a rhetorical spillover into Mongolia with 10,000 hits on the phrase "Mongolia has been part of China since ancient times" [URL [tinyurl.com/mongolia-at](http://tinyurl.com/mongolia-at)].

Comment: SecState Clinton Also Victim of Chinese Censorship

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¶12. (SBU) Foreign visitors and scholars are sometimes victims of misrepresentation of their statements in the PRC press on sensitive issues. For example, translations of foreign books, including books by prominent Americans including the memoir of as then-senator Clinton (on references to Tiananmen) are sometimes censored. Each time, the offended foreigner, if they dare to try to set the record straight, has not been able to reach the Chinese audience with a reply. The problem of "Tibet has been part of China since ancient times" is not a historical one. The problem is politicizing historical questions.  
BROWN